

September 3, 2008

Dear B.C.M.S. Parent/Guardian,

Your child has just begun my 7th grade science class! It will be a busy year as students learn a variety of topics relating to matter, sound, light, diversity, cells, genetics, geology, weather and the solar system. Throughout the year, students will use the scientific method in labs and hands-on activities. The scientific method is the theme that ties all other science content areas together. Students won't be expected just to memorize facts, but solve problems as well. Because students take the science MEAP in October of their 8th grade year instead of February, it will be especially important that students master 7th grade science benchmarks. There's no time to waste! The first several days of the school year, however, we still develop a sense of community in the classroom, practice cooperative group skills, define learning, explore learning styles and master procedures for running class.

The atmosphere in my classroom is positive and active. Seldom are students disrespectful. However, if a student disturbs others from learning, my approach to discipline is consistent with school policy. If a student is being disruptive by breaking a rule, s/he is given a reminder. The second time the student is disruptive during the hour, s/he has made the choice to go to the Responsible Thinking Classroom and develop a behavior plan. Responsible Thinking works because your child is guaranteed a learning climate that is disruption free. The school rules are:

- Keep hands, feet and other objects to yourself at all times.
- If you don't have something nice or positive to say, don't say anything.
- Respect the rights of self and others at all times.

Students can't wait to get to my class on time because they enjoy it so much! But unlike 6th grade, students now switch teachers *every hour*. This new routine can take some getting used to, and organization can be a challenge. Help your child

and buy them a Trapper Keeper with an organized folder system. Then, follow-up by checking the Trapper on a regular basis. Stop by your child's locker once a quarter to help them keep their locker organized, too. You might be surprised by what's decomposing in there, especially if your child is in a sport!

Wondering how you can help my class? Here is a list of items that would help me out:

- 1) Boxes of Kleenex (We always run out halfway through the year.)
- 2) Fish food for the two aquaria in class
- 3) Aquarium fish that are small and non-aggressive (Tetras, zebras, angel fish and certain barbs do very well in my tanks)
- 4) #2 pencils for the community pencil jar

Your child can expect homework when s/he is absent, not using class time wisely, or if they're really "into" a project. All other work is done in class, so it is essential that students come to class on time, read the overhead instructions every day, bring their Agenda to class, and use their project folder to help stay organized. About 80% of a student's grade is the daily work they turn in during class. No more than 20% of a student's grade is from quiz and exam scores. My grading scale is the standard 90 - 100% = A, 80 - 89% = B, etc.

On my classroom door, I post the Michigan Benchmark in science that we are studying. As our class moves from one topic to the next, I change the benchmark on the door as needed. This way, students receive a daily visual reminder of our big picture. Plus, they will have a topic of conversation for the dinner table. 😊

I hope we can meet in person during Parent Orientation night, which starts at 7:00 PM on Thursday, September 11. If not, you are welcome to stop by the school some other time. If you have any questions, you can reach my classroom directly at 439-8205 or my home number (before 9:00 PM) at 347-9360. Finally, once the school year is under way, your child's grade in science will be accessible through PowerSchool, our new grading software.

I look forward to getting to know your child and having a fun year together.

Sincerely,

Scott Smith

